



ELL 019:  
Creative Writing  
Ipek University  
Spring 2015

Meeting Room (Ground Floor)  
T 13:10-14:00  
F 12:30-14:00

Autumn Watts  
awatts@ipek.edu.tr

Office Hours:  
T 15:00-17:00

Office:  
Room 104

Writing is being able to take something whole and fiercely alive that exists inside you . . . and to then store it like a genie in tense, tiny black symbols on a calm white page.

– Mary Gaitskill

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will offer an adventurous introduction to creative writing. Students will learn how to expand their imagination, strengthen their writing voice, and explore their ideas and ways to express them. While much of our attention will focus on the elements and craft of two major genres—the short story and the poem—we’ll also play with flash fiction, prose-poems, and other experimental forms. Because good writers are also voracious readers, we’ll look closely at the works of diverse authors to figure out what they did and how they did it—and then try those techniques out in our own writing. Peer workshop will play a very large role in this class, along with in-class exercises and assigned writing prompts—and, of course, lots and lots of drafting and revising.

The goal of this course is threefold:

- ▶ To equip you with a creative writer’s toolkit;
- ▶ To provide you with a tribe of peers and readers for your writing;
- ▶ To help you find the words and means to express the images and stories you wish to tell, however you wish to tell them.

## COURSEWORK

**Texts.** Readings will consist of short stories, poems, novel excerpts, and other creative works from a diverse range of contemporary writers. These will be either given out in class or posted on Blackboard. Some we'll read in class, and some you'll take home or download. Again: good writers are hungry readers. They read all the time, they read everything. And what they read feeds what they write. Many of our in-class writing exercises and journal prompts will be drawn directly from the readings. So please do the readings, bring a hardcopy to class, and be ready to talk about them.

**Reading Responses.** That said, writing can also help us digest what we read. For this reason, I'll also ask you to post a brief written response to some of the assigned readings on Blackboard. In your response, you'll share your observations about the reading, what stood out for you—and why—and one thoughtful question for discussion in class.

**Writing Journal.** Buy a notebook. Keep it with you. Scribble in your thoughts throughout the day. Jot down ideas and images. Record your dreams when you wake up. Transcribe lines of overhead dialogue. Copy out beautiful passages you've read. Think of this journal as the garden of your ideas: a place to toss down seeds, some of which may bloom into poems or stories. I'll ask to see this journal twice during the semester.

**Peer Workshop.** Giving and receiving feedback will play a huge role in the course. All of you will have the chance to have at least one story and one poem workshopped and give weekly feedback to your peers. (Your thoughtful, constructive feedback on your peers' work develops your own writing muscle, too.) In Peer Workshop, you'll provide feedback in two ways: you'll mark up your copy of the story/poem, and you'll also type and print your feedback in a brief (½ to 1 page) letter. You'll turn in one copy to the author and one copy to me. Peer Workshop grades will be based on your **Feedback Portfolio** and **Peer Assessment**.

▶ **Feedback Portfolio.** Being a good peer reviewer is an acquired skill; it takes time and practice. I'll score your feedback sheets on a check +/- scale to help guide your progress. At the end of the semester, you'll collect these sheets into a portfolio with a reflection on your strengths, challenges, and learning as a peer reviewer.

▶ **Peer Assessment.** You'll also have the chance to give feedback on the quality and effort of your peer reviewers' contributions to workshop (and also receive feedback on your own.) This will factor into your Peer Workshop grade as well.

Remember: this class is your tribe. Although the semester will eventually end, your relationships don't have to—you could still be reading and giving feedback on each other's work years from now. Take care of these relationships. They are precious for writers.

**Participation.** This is not a class to doze in or update Facebook. Each student's contribution to the class is extremely important. You are expected to be actively engaged and present: to speak, to listen, to encourage, and to show sincere effort and good will always. Participation will be scored based on your activity in class and our **course blog**.

► **Course blog.** Every Friday before midnight, you'll post at least one of your in-class exercises to our online course blog. You'll have the opportunity to read and comment on the posts of your peers. If you're a shy person in class and don't speak up as much as you'd like, here's your chance to shine.

**Final Portfolio.** Your Final Portfolio will showcase your writing in this course—and you'll be doing a lot of it. In addition to the daily exercises and prompts, I'm expecting you to extensively revise at least one short story and one poem, which you will receive feedback on during workshop and also from me in our one-on-one meeting. Your Final Portfolio will present the final, polished revisions of this story and poem (along with all previous drafts and comments), plus a selection of writing from your exercises/journal that you're the most proud of, and a self-reflection on your growth in this course overall.

**Reading Event.** At the end of the semester, we'll organize a public reading event for all the members of this class. Writing is too often a solitary activity; we spend immense amounts of time in our own heads, slogging away, and much of our work will never see daylight. Because of this, writers tend to congregate at events with other writers: book festivals, writing retreats, conferences, readings, and so on. These events are fun. It's inspiring to hear other people read their work—and exciting to read your own. Even if you think you will COLLAPSE AND DIE if you have to get on stage and share your work aloud, please try it anyway. You'll be glad you did.

## COURSE EVALUATION

All of the tasks described above are intended to help you grow, challenge yourself, and discover new strengths and abilities. Prompts and exercises help you generate material; readings help you absorb new tools and approaches; and peer workshops help you become a better reader, writer, thinker, and communicator. In evaluating your work, the goal is to reinforce your learning and mentor your development in all of these areas.

TASK	WEIGHT
Reading Responses	5%
Writing Journal	10%
Participation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Class activities</li> <li>• Course blog</li> </ul>	15%
Peer Workshop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback Portfolio</li> <li>• Peer assessment</li> </ul>	30%
Final Portfolio	40%

## COURSE POLICIES

**Written Work.** All drafts of stories and poems must be typed. Except in very exceptional cases, emailed work will NOT be accepted. Please bring hardcopies to class.

**One-on-one meetings.** At least twice during the semester you will meet with me individually to talk about your writing—usually after workshop. In addition to these meetings, I'll be happy to meet with you for feedback on your work whenever you wish. You can drop by during my reserved office hours (Tuesdays 15:00-17:00) or make an appointment.

**Deadlines.** You are expected to meet deadlines and turn in work on time—especially when you're being workshopped. Peer Workshops cannot be rescheduled or made up, except for medical or other urgent reasons.

**Attendance Policy.** Students are required to attend a minimum of 70% of total course hours. Attendance is counted from the first class. Those who exceed the attendance limit by missing 12 or more hours will automatically receive an 'FX' grade for the course. You are expected to keep track of your own absences and you are also responsible for any homework, exercises, or assignments you missed, as well as turning in any workshop drafts or peer feedback letters on the day they're due.

**Plagiarism and Academic Integrity.** This is a creative writing class. All material you produce should be created by you. Any ideas or phrases that are not your own should be enclosed in quotation marks and attributed to their original owners. If you're not sure how to do this properly, just ask me. You are responsible for not plagiarizing and will be held accountable if you do. Students who plagiarize will fail the course and may face disciplinary action.

**Courtesy and Professionalism.** Our classroom requires mutual respect from every member so that all may learn and explore ideas in a safe, optimal environment; therefore, the rights of others to express their views must be respected. I expect all students to show courtesy and tolerance, to honor confidentiality, and to never share outside of this class any personal information or writing from your colleagues without their permission. Anyone who fails to honor the professional, respectful behavior expected in this classroom may be asked to leave or face other disciplinary action. In addition, please show courtesy by avoiding the following:

▶ **Tardiness.** Arriving late or leaving early disrupts the class, derails conversations, and generally interrupts the work we're doing. Please arrange to come to class on time. Chronic tardiness will harm your participation grade.

▶ **Inattention.** Similarly, whispering to a friend or playing with your phone while another person in class is speaking (including me) not only shows a glaring lack of respect for the other person, it's also just plain rude. Don't be rude.

**Emails.** Please note that you are expected to check your Ipek University email daily for information or news about the course.

**Blackboard.** Students are expected to read announcements, post online, download and print course materials, and respond to emails sent via Blackboard. Enrollment in the Blackboard Course is mandatory and students are responsible for ensuring they are properly registered for this course.

**Extra Credit.** No extra credit assignments will be given during or after the course. If you are concerned about your grades in this course—or having difficulty with the assignments—please come see me as early as possible

**Open Door Policy.** I encourage you to contact me ([awatts@ipek.edu.tr](mailto:awatts@ipek.edu.tr)) or visit my office (104) if you have any questions or concerns about your work in this course, about academic life, or other issues. I have reserved the hours of 15:00-17:00 on Tuesdays specifically for this class; this is the best time to meet with me as I will be most available then. However, appointments may also be arranged outside of these hours. I am always happy to meet with you or suggest referrals if your needs fall outside my professional scope.